

early voting and no-excuse absentees in Georgia is racist Jim Crow?

The Senate Democratic leader pretends it is a civil rights crisis that Georgia has enshrined more early voting and more absentee balloting than his own State of New York has ever allowed. This is misinformation. It is a Big Lie designed to reduce faith in our democracy, justify a top-down election takeover, and justify smashing the Senate itself. Some years back, a veteran Democratic Senator explained:

[The] nuclear option is ultimately an example of the arrogance of power . . . [it] would transform the Senate from the so-called cooling saucer our Founding Fathers talked about . . . to a purer majoritarian body.

That was then-Senator Joe Biden. He continued:

At its core, the filibuster is not about stopping a nominee or a bill, it is about compromise and moderation.

Now, before President Biden abruptly reversed this position he held for decades, he was actually in very good company. Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, the legendary Senate institutionalist, was this crucial tradition's fiercest defender. The current Democratic leader has tried to invoke Senator Byrd in support of this push to vandalize the Senate. This is more misinformation. Senator Byrd went out of his way to rebut Leader SCHUMER's arguments, years in advance. Here is a direct quote from Senator Byrd:

Proponents of the so-called nuclear option cite several instances in which they inaccurately allege that I blazed a procedural path toward an inappropriate change in Senate rules. They're dead wrong—

Said Senator Byrd—

Dead wrong. They draw analogies where none exist and create cockeyed comparisons that fail to withstand even the slightest intellectual scrutiny.

That is how Senator Byrd felt about it. Down to his final public statements before his death in 2010, Senator Byrd was completely consistent:

I oppose cloture by a simple majority, because it would immediately destroy the uniqueness of this institution . . . minority rights would cease to exist in the U.S. Senate.

Senator Byrd, shortly before his death.

That Democratic leader knew how to serve and protect the Senate.

This Democratic leader wants power so badly he will misrepresent his own late predecessor if it helps him get it. Senator Byrd's successor, the current senior Senator from West Virginia, has eloquently restated the very same points. Our colleague Senator MANCHIN published an op-ed explaining why "there is no circumstance in which I will vote to eliminate or weaken the filibuster"—Senator MANCHIN.

He pointed out that finding compromise across party differences and differing regional interests was "never supposed to be easy . . . but it is the work we were elected to do." He noted that current rules guarantee "that

rural and small states and the Americans who live in them . . . always have a seat at the table."

Our colleague also pointed out that the 60-vote threshold keeps Federal law durable and predictable:

If the filibuster is eliminated or budget reconciliation becomes the norm, a new and dangerous precedent will be set to pass sweeping, partisan legislation every time there is a change in political control . . . our nation may never see stable governing again.

This has been a key point for Senators on both sides going back generations. In his farewell address before retirement, our former colleague, Lamar Alexander, put it this way: The Senate rules exists to "force broad agreements on controversial issues that become laws that most of us will vote for and that a diverse country will accept."

In other words, major changes need major buy-in. Otherwise, every policy would ping-pong wildly whenever the gavels change hands.

This is a point which our colleague, the senior Senator from Arizona, has explained powerfully. As Senator SINEMA wrote just a few months ago, "the 60-vote threshold . . . compels moderation and helps protect the country from wild swings . . . and radical reversals in Federal policy."

Sometimes the effect of the filibuster is to block bills outright. Republicans are using the tool to stop one-party election takeovers. In 2020, Democrats used it to kill Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill. But as President Biden argued decades ago, the filibuster is about more than what gets blocked. It shapes almost everything the Senate actually does pass. It gives all kinds of citizens and all kinds of States a meaningful voice in nearly everything.

By breaking the Senate, this Democratic leader wants to silence the voices of millions and millions of Americans. He wants to throw whole regions of the country into a political power outage because those voters don't agree with his radicalism. We will see which Senators have the courage and the principle to put a stop to it.

Finally, on a more practical level, I want to make something very, very clear. Fifty Republican Senators, the largest possible minority, have been sent here to represent the many millions of Americans whom Leader SCHUMER wants so badly to leave behind. So if my colleagues try to break the Senate to silence those millions of Americans, we will make their voices heard in this Chamber in ways that are more inconvenient for the majority and this White House than what anybody has seen in living memory.

Last year, the Senate passed major bipartisan legislation on infrastructure, on hate crimes, on government funding, on competing with China. Last year, Senators helped speed through noncontroversial nominations.

So what would a postnuclear Senate look like? I assure you, it would not be more efficient or more productive. I personally guarantee it.

Do my colleagues understand how many times per day the Senate needs and gets unanimous consent for basic housekeeping? Do they understand how many things would require rollcall votes, how often the minority could demand lengthy debate?

Our colleagues who are itching for a procedural nuclear winter have not even begun to contemplate how it would look. Our colleagues who are itching to drain every drop of collegiality from this body have not even begun to consider how that would work.

If the Democratic leader tries to shut millions of Americans and entire States out of the business of governing, the operations of this body will change. Oh, yes, that much is true. But not in ways that reward the rulebreakers, not in ways that advantage this President, this majority, or their party—I guarantee it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today, President Biden will be speaking in Georgia as part of Democrats' effort to convince the American people that voting rights are under attack so they can justify their attempt to abolish the Senate filibuster to pass their partisan election legislation.

A noted Democrat operative once famously said that you should never let a good crisis go to waste. He meant, of course, that a crisis could give you the opportunity to push things through that you might not be able to get done in the ordinary course of things. It is a lesson the Democrats have learned well.

Last March, for example, Democrats used the cover of the COVID crisis to pass a so-called COVID relief bill that had very little to do with COVID relief and had a lot to do with expanding the role of government and providing payoffs to Democrat constituencies.

But, unfortunately for Democrats, when it comes to election legislation, there is no crisis for Democrats to exploit, so Democrats have spent the past year busily trying to manufacture one. I say the past year, but Democrats have actually been claiming there is a voting crisis for much longer.

The source of the election bill that we will likely vote on this week is H.R. 1—election legislation that was first introduced by Democrats back in 2019. Back then, Democrats told us that our election system was broken and that we needed this bill to fix it. After all, a Republican had won the last Presidential election and beat a favored Democrat candidate. Surely, surely, that meant our system was in trouble. But then the 2020 elections came along, and Democrats won the Presidency and a majority—albeit a narrow majority—in both Houses of Congress. Voter turnout was massive, and a Pew Research Center poll found that 94 percent of people found it easy to vote—94 percent. So all of a sudden, it was pretty

difficult for Democrats to claim that our system was broken. But they still wanted to pass their election legislation, so they came up with a new crisis.

In 2021, a number of States passed updates to their voting laws—partly because of the challenges and special circumstances that arose as a result of the pandemic. Democrats decided that these commonsense, mainstream updates represented an unprecedented attack on voting rights.

Georgia, which was one of the first to enact voting legislation, has become the poster child for the Democrats' campaign to convince Americans that their voting rights are in danger.

So what terrible voter suppression measures are States imposing? Well, one provision of the Georgia law that has come in for a lot of Democrat outrage is its measure forbidding partisan political organizations from providing individuals with food or water within 150 feet of a polling place. Yes, apparently preventing partisan political organizations from providing lunch to voters threatens the very stability of our entire democracy.

Now, nothing in Georgia's law prevents outside groups from providing food and water to individuals outside the 150-foot radius, and Georgia's law explicitly allows nonpartisan election workers, as opposed to political groups, to make water available to voters. Of course, I am pretty sure any voter can bring his or her own food and water. But none of that has prevented Democrats from suggesting that rules about food and water distribution at polling places represent a grave threat to voting rights.

Ironically, the State of New York has a similar provision in its election law prohibiting any refreshment or provision to a voter at a polling place except if the retail value of what is given is less than \$1 and the person or entity providing it is not identified. Yet I don't see the Democrats traveling to New York to decry the threat to democracy posed by the New York Legislature.

After Georgia passed its voting law, President Biden got up and attacked the law for supposedly ending voting early to prevent working people from voting. He made that accusation repeatedly. The problem? There was exactly zero truth to his claim. In fact, as the Washington Post's Fact Checker column pointed out, "experts say the net effect of the new early-voting rules was to expand the opportunities to vote for more Georgians, not limit them."

That is from the Washington Post's Fact Checker. Let me just repeat that:

[E]xperts say that the net effect of the new early-voting rules was to expand the opportunities to vote for most Georgians, not limit them.

The Fact Checker gave the President four Pinochios—a rating the column reserves for "whoppers"—for his false claim that the law was designed to keep working Americans from voting.

I would also like to point out that not only is Georgia's election reform law thoroughly mainstream, Georgia's laws are actually more permissive in some respects than voting laws in some Democrat States.

Georgia offers no-excuse absentee voting. The Democrat leader's home State—Senator SCHUMER's home State—does not. In fact, voters in the Democrat leader's home State actually just rejected a ballot measure that would have allowed no-excuse absentee voting. I guess the Democrat leader thinks that those voters are trying to destroy our democracy.

Georgia also has way more days of early voting than the Democrat leader's home State. So does Arizona, another State that has come under fire from Democrats for updating its election laws. Yet red States, according to Democrats, are the States attempting to suppress votes.

It is also important to note that the Georgia law was written to address concerns from Republican and Democrat voters, including concerns raised by Stacey Abrams-affiliated groups over the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election.

There is no question—no question—we should make voting easy and accessible, but there are a lot of different ways to do that. States can have different requirements and still all offer ample opportunities to vote.

Also, I think my Democrat friends need a little perspective check. There are countries where individuals would consider it a privilege to be able to stand in line to vote in a free election—even if someone didn't provide them with food and water.

Of course, no one wants voters to have to stand in long lines, and, in fact, Georgia's election law will make it less likely that they have to. But Democrats' dramatic claims that a long line or a lack of a drop box or, say, 9 as opposed to 10 days of early voting somehow threatens the right to vote in this country are nothing short of absurd. I have faith that Americans are capable of voting even without the Democratic Party providing them with a boxed lunch.

There is no election crisis in this country. This last election—biggest turnout in American history in 120 years. You have to go back to the year 1900 to find a time when the election turnout in an American election was equal to or exceeded what we had in 2020. What there is, is a partisan Democrat election bill the Democrats have wanted to pass since long before the Georgia Legislature reformed their election laws because they think it will give them an advantage in future elections. You don't have to take my word for it; more than one Democrat has openly admitted the Democrats want to pass a Federal election takeover because they think it will give their party an advantage in the next election.

If Democrats were really concerned about the security of our democracy

and the integrity of our elections, if they really cared about affirming Americans' faith in our electoral system, they would not be seeking to break the Senate rules to pass a totally—totally—partisan election bill on a totally partisan basis. A partisan Federal election takeover is not going to do anything to strengthen Americans' faith in our system. On the contrary, it will sow mistrust and division and heighten partisanship.

Instead of changing the rules to gain an advantage in the next election, I would suggest that my Democrat colleagues instead try coming up with an agenda that would appeal to a broad majority of Americans—perhaps starting with a plan to address the inflation crisis the Democrats have helped create. That would be a far better use of their time than undermining faith in our electoral system with a partisan rules change and a partisan Federal takeover of elections.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I will speak today on two topics—No. 1, the substance of the bill, which is, I guess, yet to be known, regarding voting rights, which I consider to be a Federal takeover of State elections, and the constant threat of changing the rules of the Senate to do away with the legislative filibuster as we know it.

I would say to my Democratic colleagues, this has been going on for quite a while, the constant threat by Senator SCHUMER to change the rules to pass whatever legislation you-all can come up with.

All I can say is, things were different when we were in charge. We had the House, the Senate, and the White House. President Trump constantly urged Senator MCCONNELL and all of us on the Republican side to change the rules of the Senate so he could pass his agenda unimpeded; that anything that came out of the House, which was under Republican control, could sail right through the Senate with Republican votes only.

It was pretty clear to my Democratic colleagues that was not a good outcome, I thought for the country, but I guess for them.

We signed a letter on April 7, 2017—61 signatures: 28 Republicans, 32 Democrats, and 1 Independent. The letter was sent to Senator MCCONNELL, who was the majority leader, and the minority leader was Senator SCHUMER at the time, urging both leaders that, no matter what differences we have had regarding Executive nominations and judges, we should preserve the minority's rights under the so-called legislative filibuster.

Apparently, it made perfect sense to my Democratic colleagues that the Senate not change to accommodate Donald Trump and his wishes. I was assuming that the statement by my Democratic colleagues was about the institution, not just about the Trump Presidency and the times in which we lived in 2017.

Apparently, I was wrong—except for a handful. And to Senators SINEMA and MANCHIN, you have led from the front, not from the rear. You have taken your fair share of criticism as you have opposed changing the Senate rules to accommodate the voting rights bill, and it has been—the argument goes that this is so fundamental to democracy, voting, that the Senate has to give way in this instance.

All I can say is that when many of us were in your shoes, we didn't make an exception for a piece of legislation that we thought was critical to the future of the country. And it would be easy to find an exception here and there and everywhere, to the point that the rule bends with the exception. Now, I appreciate your steadfastness in that regard, and, apparently, as you read the news, a few more Democrats are becoming publicly unnerved by the thought of changing the legislative filibuster—just a handful. And we are supposed to be in over the weekend, I think, maybe even into Monday, to have the change—rules change—but that may be in flux now because it appears a handful of Democrats are showing some distaste for changing the rules. I don't know why they are coming out now. I appreciate it.

I don't think it would be very popular in certain States to change the rules of the Senate that would pave the way for the most radical agenda in my lifetime. I don't know if that has got something to do with it or if there is a newfound religion here by a handful.

To the rest, I won't forget this. I was 1 of the 28 Republicans who signed the letter to the leaders of the Senate asking that the institution maintain the legislative filibuster, and not because it benefited me personally but because I thought it benefited the American people.

The day you make the Senate the House, we are going to have wild policy changes. When we are in charge, we will go down one road; when Democrats are in charge, they will go down another road, and there will be a just unnerving aspect of this, in my view, and I think for well over a century, the Senate has prevented these wild changes. And that means you don't get what you would like as conservatives. The same people who are applauding my resistance to changing the filibuster today were all over me when we were in charge wanting me to change the filibuster. I understand that.

Ideological people want their way, and they don't particularly care how they get it. Most Americans have a more balanced approach about how the legislative process should work, and I

think, over time, the requirement to get a handful of people from the other party to pass legislation, particularly major legislation, has served the country well.

There are things that we would do completely different than our Democratic friends because we have different views, and some of these ideas just never make it through the Senate. And every now and then we will come up with solutions to hard problems that are bipartisan because we have to, as long as the legislative filibuster is around.

So the idea of changing the legislative filibuster would pave the way, if Democrats have all branches of government here, to make DC and Puerto Rico a State. I think they would. It paves the way for increasing the number of Justices on the Supreme Court because liberals don't like the current makeup. I think there would be a move to abolish the electoral college, which would be devastating for South Carolina.

And to all the people in this body, adding two more States may serve your interests, but it certainly dilutes the power you have as an individual State.

So the legislative filibuster is a stop sign to the most radical agenda I have seen since I have been up here, and it was a stop sign to the Trump agenda, and you just fill in the blanks.

This effort by Senator SCHUMER to abolish the legislative filibuster under the guise of a single exception is cynical and I think a sign of desperation.

I like Senator SCHUMER. I have been able to work with him—immigration and other hot-button issues—but the truth of the matter is, this all started back when President Bush's judicial nominees were filibustered en masse that led to the Gang of 14, spearheaded by Senator Byrd, sort of one of the icons of the Senate, to make sure that filibustering judges would be done only in extraordinary circumstances. We broke the logjam. We lost a couple of good conservative judges as part of the compromise, and that held until it no longer held.

In 2013, I got a call from Senator SCHUMER—I never will forget it—that we are going to push for a rules change when it comes to court of appeals and district court judges—I think in 2013.

I remember the reaction I had and Senator McCain's, and they were able to do that. And when President Trump became President and had a couple of Democratic—excuse me—a couple Supreme Court vacancies to fill, they were all filibustered, starting with Gorsuch, to the point that we changed the rules so that he could get some people on the Court who I think were highly qualified. So the bottom line is, when it comes to judges, the ship has sailed. Executive appointments, maybe that should have been changed. The effect on the judiciary, I think, is going to be detrimental over time.

The most ideological elements of each conference will have a large say

about what kind of judges we put on the court, and you will see a change over time from the right and the left because you no longer have to reach across the aisle to put a judge on the court.

Apply that to legislation and, again, it would be devastating to the country and this body to not require some form of consensus when it comes to legislation and deny the minority the ability to require that consensus.

As to voting rights itself, I think this is the most hyped, manufactured issue in a long time. This is a problem in search of—it is not a problem in search of a solution; it is a manufactured problem.

States under our Constitution are supposed to run elections. In my State, I think we do a pretty good job. There are some efforts to change election laws throughout the country. As more and more people vote by mail, I think it is incumbent that you have the same voter identification requirements by voting by mail as you do in person. It would be so easy to manipulate that system.

The bottom line here is this is an effort by the Democratic leader to basically say that Republicans, at our heart, are a bunch of racists when it comes to voting; that the reason they are having to do this is that States are changing laws to disenfranchise people of color and minorities.

I find that, like, incredibly offensive—I mean, just beyond offensive. In my State, which is 30 percent-plus African American, we have robust opportunity to vote. All these laws that are being changed to implement voter integrity, I think, are necessary in the times in which we live.

But the bill coming before the body, whatever it is, is a federalization of the election process. It is not about enfranchising the voters; it is about enfranchising the ability of the left to take over the electoral process to skew it to their favor, and I think almost all of us see it that way over here.

So, you know, as a Republican, particularly from the South, you sort of get used to being called a racist. It is never pleasant, but you sort of get used to it. It is the cheapest form of politics. It is very unsavory to the people in my State.

I went through that process in 2020, and I hope I have lived a life to convince reasonable people that, whatever flaws I have, being a racist is not one of them.

And to clothe this exercise here as some kind of moral imperative that if we don't do this bill, then people throughout the country will lose their right to vote because Republicans, at the end of the day, don't want people of color to vote is beyond offensive, and I hope it fails and that we can get back to some sense of regular order around here.

But I will end with this: When the shoe was on the other foot, most of us didn't do this. Your country needs you

right now to speak up. If you support changing the legislative filibuster one time for the voting rights bill, you support the end of it because there will be no end to the exceptions.

And most of you over there have been hiding in the corner, letting other people take the arrows. It is time for you to speak up. I actually hope we have a vote because I want to know where people are, whom I can count on and whom I can't, to understand what is transactional and what is about the body. Time will tell.

I yield the floor to Senator CORNYN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, considering the way our Democratic friends talk about the state of voting rights in America, it is easy to see why some people have expressed concerns because if you took them at face value, you might be very worried about the state of voting rights in our country, but there is more to the story than that, which I will hope to explain here in the next few minutes.

For example, when it comes to the alarmism about voting rights, look no further than the Democratic majority whip, Senator DURBIN from Illinois, who said there is an "insidious effort to suppress the rights of voters of color."

Senator SCHUMER, the majority leader, Senator from New York, has said the right to vote is "under attack in ways we have not seen in generations."

President Biden himself has said there is a "21st century Jim Crow assault" on the right to vote.

If you were to take these at face value and accept them, obviously, you would be very concerned about the state of voting rights.

But there is more to the story, as I said. If you just listen to these statements, you would think that the States—the 50 States—had just imposed literacy tests on voting. You would think the disgusting and subjective determinations of "good moral character" that existed before the civil rights movement had somehow sprung back to life. You might even wonder if the Supreme Court of the United States has struck down the Voting Rights Act itself.

(Mr. KELLY assumed the Chair.)

Obviously, none of these things are true. There is simply no concerted effort to attempt to prevent voters of color or any eligible voters from casting their ballots.

The Voting Rights Act—one of the most important pieces of legislation in our Nation's history—is alive and well. I think the Voting Rights Act has done more to change our country for the better than any other piece of legislation that I can think of.

So, to be frank, the facts simply don't support our Democratic colleagues' alarming rhetoric about the state of voting in America. This narrative of widespread voter suppression is nothing more than a scare tactic to achieve a political outcome.

Our colleagues across the aisle have introduced many different versions of their Federal takeover of State elections bill, but the justification seems to always change. First they said it was a matter of election security; then of voter confidence; and then and now, a way to remove obstacles that prevented people from voting. Today, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim that this legislation is necessary because the States have passed new laws that restrict voting access. So let's just take a look at what some of those laws entail.

One of those laws in my State of Texas, where the goal is pretty simple, which is to make voting easier and to make it harder to cheat—Texas already offers 2 weeks of early voting in person, and the new law didn't make any changes in that. For 2 weeks, you can show up and vote in person before election day—hardly a restriction on people's access to the ballot.

This law did, in addition to making sure that people had 2 weeks to vote in person early, extend voting hours in more than 60 different Texas counties and clarify that voters who were in line at the time the polls closed would still be able to cast their ballot. It doesn't sound like voter suppression to me.

But the law also took some measures to reduce opportunities for fraud or mischief. Texas voting systems must now be tested before an election to ensure there are no technical difficulties. I am sure all of us are familiar with the occasional problem with voting machines, technical difficulties that need to be fixed to make sure it counts each legitimate vote. And we did make sure that voting rolls reflected only qualified voters. In other words, voters who passed away were removed from the voting rolls.

My State, like others, has clarified that the temporary, pandemic-related measures were not intended to be permanent. We did take some extraordinary precautions in the midst of COVID-19 to make sure people had access to the ballot. But these are hardly—restoration of the status quo before COVID-19 is hardly an example of voter repression.

I mentioned Texas and its expansive right to cast your ballot in person and to make sure everybody in line when the polls close could still cast their ballot.

Another State that has come under fire is Georgia. As a matter of fact, the Attorney General of the United States has sued Texas and Florida and Georgia under the Voting Rights Act. And, of course, President Biden is highlighting the Georgia laws because he is visiting today doing what I have never seen a President do before, and that is, villainize a State's new voting law, which, to me, is a bizarre thing for a sitting President to do, to travel to a State for the purpose of villainizing that State's law.

I doubt he will mention the fact that Georgia actually extended early voting

to 17 days. That is not an example of voter suppression, of trying to restrict people's access to the ballot. As a matter of fact, that is much more generous than what President Biden's home State of Delaware has offered in terms of early access to the ballot.

So these clearly are not examples of Jim Crow voter suppression. These are commonsense measures designed to encourage people's confidence in the integrity of the voting systems and to make sure that they are both accessible and secure. These efforts should not be villainized; they should be applauded. They shouldn't be twisted beyond recognition, trying to manipulate the facts in order to achieve a political outcome.

If these State voting laws, then, are not designed to restrict access to the ballot, you might wonder whether there was a preexisting problem. So let's have a look.

Did voters actually have a problem casting their ballot during the last election? Well, following the 2020 election, the Pew Research Center conducted a poll of the voting experience, and it found that the vast majority of voters, 94 percent—94 percent—said that voting was easy. I don't think you could get 94 percent of people to agree that the Earth is round anymore, but here we have 94 percent of the voters who voted with ease in 2020. This is a stark contrast with the claimed assault on voting rights that we have heard so much about from our colleagues on the left.

Despite what the radical left might lead you to believe, there is no nationwide assault on voting rights. If there were, every person in this building would be lined up to defend the right to vote, not just Democrats. This is a manufactured crisis designed to achieve a political outcome.

There are plenty of safeguards already in place to prevent discriminatory voting laws from taking effect, the most important of which, as I have already said, is the Voting Rights Act. Because of this legislation, the Justice Department has the authority to take action against any State, any political entity that discriminates on the basis of race, color, or membership in a language-minority group. This has been the case for half a century, and no one—no one—wants to weaken or eliminate those protections.

Unfortunately, some of our colleagues on the left have misrepresented the picture of voting rights in America to justify this partisan power grab. The legislation they have introduced does more to enhance their own power than it does to address voting rights. These bills aren't about supporting disenfranchised voters or fighting voter suppression because, as we know, there is no nationwide assault on the right to vote, notwithstanding what some have claimed. This is simply about enhancing the political power of the Democratic Party. They want to seize States' constitutional authority to

manage their own elections and use it for their own benefit.

That is one of the most curious things about this debate that we are hearing from some of our Democratic colleagues. They want to actually vote for a nationwide, one-size-fits-all standard, to the detriment of their own States' voting laws.

It is pretty strange to come here representing a State—let's say I was in the shoes of the Democrats. If I were to come here to say "Well, my State has passed voting laws. I represent my State, but I want the Federal Government to take over the voting laws and to suppress and supersede the voting laws in my State"—that is what our Democratic colleagues are asking for.

President Biden, apparently, rather than changing the voting laws in his home State of Delaware, wants the Federal Government to create a one-size-fits-all answer to voting rights in America—again, something that is inconsistent with the Constitution and makes no sense at all.

Well, to make matters even worse, some of our colleagues are even advocating blowing up the Senate in order to achieve their goals because they know they don't have 60 votes in order to close off debate.

Now, the 60-vote requirement is the subject of a lot of controversy, but, frankly, it makes good common sense. In a country as big and diverse as America, do you really want to have a partisan majority of 51 writing the laws that affect 330 million people, only to have, after the next election, the next majority undo those or change them in some other way? Wouldn't you want a mechanism that forces us to do what we might consider to be a little unnatural, which is actually to build consensus and build bipartisanship to make sure that the laws we pass are not only adequately debated and thought out, but they could endure beyond the next election because they enjoyed the support of bipartisan majorities?

That is what the 60-vote cloture requirement is really about. It is about making sure that purely partisan outcomes don't succeed and forcing us to do what I believe is in the best interest of the American people, which is force us to work together to achieve bipartisan consensus.

The election takeover bill may be the first one our Democratic colleagues try to pass if they eliminate or weaken the filibuster, but it won't be the last. This isn't going to be a one-and-done exercise. Anybody who says you can carve out voting laws and everything else will remain the same is just kidding themselves and the American people. If the Democrats created a carve-out for election-related bills, there would be nothing—nothing—stopping them from resurrecting early versions of the election takeover bill and passing them on a completely partisan basis.

Previous versions of this bill would have turned the historically bipartisan

Federal Election Commission into a partisan body. They would have mandated ballot harvesting and seized States' constitutional authority to draw their own congressional districts. These are the types of radical measures that we could see under what our colleagues call a modest carve-out.

If our Democrat colleagues eliminated the bipartisan 60-vote requirement, the floodgates of partisan legislation would surely open. Last year, our colleagues tried to pass legislation that exploits the cause of pay fairness to send a wave of business to trial lawyers. They pushed for another bill that would impose crushing legal penalties on those who refuse to comply with woke social norms.

If the filibuster—the 60-vote bipartisan filibuster—were eliminated, Republicans would have no way of stopping these bills from becoming law. And it doesn't stop there. The threat doesn't stop there.

Think of the most controversial bills that our Democratic colleagues have proposed. They could add new States to the Union—DC statehood, Puerto Rican statehood. They could pack the Supreme Court of the United States with liberal Justices. They could pass laws that infringe on the Second Amendment to the Constitution, the right to keep and bear arms, or legalize abortion up until the time a baby is delivered in the third trimester. They could impose job-killing taxes and kick-start the Green New Deal.

So what is at stake here this week is far more than the fate of one or two bills. Our colleagues are proposing to put a thumb on the scale to benefit the Democratic Party.

If the filibuster, the bipartisan 60-vote requirement, is eliminated, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will have unchecked power to write the laws affecting 330 million Americans. We know they are already willing to manufacture a voting rights crisis to increase their own power. If they are willing to do that, what aren't they willing to do? I know I am not alone in saying I hope we never find out.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, will my colleague from Texas yield for a request, just a request. I would like to borrow his chart.

Mr. CORNYN. I have yielded the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. OK. My colleague, I would yield to you. I have the floor.

Do you mind if I borrow your chart? Great. Thank you.

Now, my good colleague from Texas says 94 percent of voters said voting was easy in 2020. So why don't we keep it that way?

Isn't it true that all of the changes that we are arguing about are post-2020, and is it an overwhelming likelihood that this number, if these changes are allowed to go into effect, will go way down? So, yes, we agree. Keep the

2020 laws. Maybe we should improve them. Right now, what we are combating is a series of legislatures—19—and 33 laws that will make this number surely go down because it makes voting less hard. So we agree that 2020 worked out OK. I guess my friend is saying the Big Lie is false because Donald Trump said it was fraudulent, the election results.

I would thank my colleague for his chart and will be using it again.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. SCHUMER. I sure would.

Mr. CORNYN. Would you give me an example of one of the laws passed in Georgia or in Texas since the 2020 election which you believe suppresses the right to vote.

Mr. SCHUMER. There is a long list of them, which I have listed in my speeches. Let me just give one or two: one, making early voting places and dropoff voting places many fewer; No. 2, in the largest county—Democratic county, African-American county—in Georgia, taking away the bipartisan ability to collect those votes; No. 3, in Georgia, making it a crime that, if you are standing in line, you can't be fed, and the lines, by the way, according to the reports I get, are much longer in African-American communities than in White suburban communities, making it much, much harder—making it a crime, rather—to give people water or a sandwich.

So I am going to now give my remarks, but I thank my colleague for the question, and I am going to take the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have one more question to clarify your response.

Mr. SCHUMER. The last question, yes.

Mr. CORNYN. Is the Senator suggesting that ballot harvesting should be required in all 50 States? That is the ability of a partisan or a participant in a political election to go around to nursing homes or to other vulnerable populations and collect ballots and turn them in.

Mr. SCHUMER. If the Senator would yield, as long as there is no fraud, if a person in a nursing home can't get to the polling place and wants to vote and someone collects their ballot, there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, that is good. That makes it easier for them to vote.

With all of these things that they bring up, there has been no evidence of fraud—none. Donald Trump has not produced any evidence of fraud. He lost by 7 million votes. Yet he is saying he won the election.

We all know what is motivating our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—obedience to Donald Trump. I would guess most of them know that the election was not stolen, that the Big Lie doesn't take effect, but Trump has such power over the Republican Party—such power—that they do what he wants in the legislatures and here in the Senate.

I would remind my good friend from Texas that his fellow Texans George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush proudly supported an extension of the Voting Rights Act. They proudly did that. It was bipartisan until Donald Trump came over and, in my opinion, poisoned the Republican Party on voting rights. We could use a little resistance to Donald Trump. We see it from a good number of Republicans out in the country, and we see it from a good number of Republican commentators, but we don't see it here in the Senate, and that is unfortunate.

I am not going to yield for a further question.

Mr. President, as I begin my remarks, let me begin with the following figure—and we will have a debate later.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me begin with the following figure: 55 million people; that is the estimated number of eligible voters who now live within States that have passed legislation restricting the right to vote and potentially undermining the electoral process.

Today, President Biden will travel to one such State, Georgia—home to one of the most egregious voter suppression and election subversion laws we have seen in a long time. I believe the President will give a strong speech and will urge that we in the Senate change the rules so that we can prevent these awful and nasty laws from being implemented. In an address to the Nation, he will use the bully pulpit of the Presidency to make the case that the time has come for the Senate to pass voting rights legislation and take whatever steps necessary to address this Chamber's rules in order to accomplish that goal.

The Senate is going to act as soon as tomorrow. It is my intention to, once again, bring legislation to the floor to fight back against the threats to democracy and protect people's access to the ballot.

Once again, I urge my Republican colleagues to take up the flag of the traditional Republican Party, not only of Lincoln but of Reagan and H. W. Bush and W. Bush and vote yes to move forward so we can have a debate like the debate we just had or the discussion we just had. But if Republicans continue to hijack the rules of the Senate to prevent voting rights from happening, if they continue paralyzing this Chamber to the point where we are helpless to fight back against the Big Lie, we must consider the necessary steps we can take so the Senate can adapt and act.

For the past few months, Senate Democrats have been holding talks within our caucus to discern how we can best move forward to restore the function of the Senate and, more importantly, pass legislation to defend democracy and protect voting rights. Last night, I held another round of

talks with a number of my colleagues about the path forward, and we did so again this morning.

Over the past few days, our Republican colleagues have escalated their attacks against our efforts to pass voting rights legislation.

Listen to this one: Last night, the Republican leader worked to place a number of “gotcha” bills onto the legislative calendar as some sort of payback for pursuing legislation to protect the sacred right to vote. He was basically saying: Here are 18 bills that Democrats don't like. Let's go for 50 votes on those. Well, I proposed to the Republican leader, in a unanimous consent request, that it would be perfectly fine with us taking votes on his bills on a simple majority threshold if, in exchange, he agreed to do the same for the Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Of course, the Republican leader immediately objected—immediately objected—to having all of them done with 50 votes: the 18 bills he proposed and our 2 voting rights bills.

The Republican leader made clear last night that the true worry on the other side isn't about the rules of the Senate—rules they were perfectly happy to change to pursue their own objectives when they were in the majority. Republicans, in truth, are afraid of the possibility that legislation to defend democracy, to fight the power of dark money, and to protect voting rights could move forward in this Chamber.

As I mentioned to my colleague from Texas, that is not all Republicans. That is not Republicans out in the country—a lot of them want to protect voting rights—but it is the Republican Party as now run by, and it is fair to say run by Donald Trump, who has propagated the Big Lie that the election was stolen and that he really won, even though he lost by 7 million votes and even though he has no evidence—nor have the commentators to that effect. Now we have at least Republicans in the Senate and the House and in lots of State legislatures completely going along with this Big Lie.

The danger there is that it jaundices our democracy. If people of color, if young people, if older people, if people in urban areas feel that their right to vote is being diminished compared to other people's—because they are not aiming this at everybody—democracy begins to wither. We have not seen an assault on voting rights since the days of the Old South, since the forties and fifties and sixties and seventies. Why would we want to regress? Why would we want to regress? So we must fight back.

Now, I understand our Republicans are going to continue their opposition through a flurry of speeches, decrying any effort by Democrats to undo these voter suppression laws and make it easier for Americans to vote.

By the way, I would remind my colleagues that this has been the grand

tradition of America. When the Constitution was written, in most States, you had to be a White male Protestant property owner to vote. No one says let's go back to those days. In general, America, with our march to freedom and our march to equality, embodied in our Constitution and in the great minds of the Founding Fathers—the greatest group of geniuses ever assembled—has marched forward. There have been regressions, but we have marched forward. We Democrats want to continue that march. We want to stop these types of laws.

The Republican leader doesn't have much to say so he has latched onto a talking point. He said the Big Lie is actually the warnings of voter suppression that come from Democrats, even though there are so many laws that are, obviously, done to suppress votes, and a lot of these Republican legislators say it openly.

So I would say to the Republican leader that his attempts to misdirect from the danger of Donald Trump's Big Lie and to try to say it is Democrats who are doing it is gaslighting, pure and simple. There is no evidence—no evidence.

The leader did it again yesterday and today on the floor, implying one more time that because the 2020 election was, indeed, successful, somehow voter suppression doesn't exist. Now, I answered my friend from Texas when he held up that chart. The Republican leader cherry-picked examples to distract from the real, unmistakable changes that are taking place in the States.

I would ask the Republican leader and the Republican Senator from Texas and every other Republican, if the 2020 election were as successful and secure and safe as he says it was, then why have Republican State legislators rushed to make it harder for people to vote in the aftermath of the 2020 election? Why can any Republican cling to the view that the election was stolen—Donald Trump's Big Lie—when JOHN CORNYN, my friend from Texas, is up there, with a chart, saying the 2020 election was successful, and the Republican leader said the same thing?

Doesn't that rebut Donald Trump? Doesn't that rebut those who came to the Capitol, motivated by Donald Trump's propagation of the Big Lie? Doesn't it rebut all of the State legislators who want to make it harder to vote if the 2020 election were successful?

Despite the Republican leader's best efforts, I have yet to hear from my Republican colleagues as to why it is OK for States like Georgia to make it a crime to give food and water to people who are waiting on line at the polls when we hear that, in minority areas and in urban areas, the lines are much longer than in rural areas.

I have yet to hear from Republicans why States like Texas and Arizona have made it a felony—a felony—for nonpartisan election workers to send